

Bush Faulted on Jordanian Aid to Iraq

House Panel Charges Deception of Congress During Persian Gulf Crisis

By Thomas W. Lippman
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Bush administration knew that Jordanian aid to Iraq during the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990-91 was more extensive than previously revealed but deceived Congress about it, a House subcommittee charged yesterday.

Officials in the Bush administration "were aware that Jordan was not only breaking sanctions against Iraq but also providing spare parts and military information to the government of Iraq," according to the report by the House Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations.

In a successful effort to persuade Congress not to cut off U.S. military aid to the government of King Hussein, a longtime U.S. ally, Bush ad-

ministration officials falsely assured Congress that President George Bush had cut off aid shipments on his own, said the report, based partly on classified documents reviewed by the General Accounting Office.

The role of King Hussein, who is due here Friday for talks with President Clinton, was one of the most contentious side issues of the crisis that followed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The king publicly sided with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, but insisted that his fragile country was honoring the international embargo on trade with Iraq—even as television cameras recorded Iraq-bound cargo trucks rolling across the border and ships bearing Iraq-bound cargo unloading at a Jordanian port.

The United States and Jordan were both in difficult situations at the time. Jordan, long allied with the West, did not wish to make an enemy of its powerful neighbor to the east or antagonize the Palestinian majority of its population, which largely supported Iraq. And the United States, while insisting Jordan comply with the embargo at considerable economic cost, did not wish to undermine King Hussein's regime, fearing what might replace it.

According to a declassified version of the GAO's findings, U.S. intelligence services knew Jordan was cooperating with Iraq in four areas, including "joint training exercises with Iraq, two cases of providing access to United States technology, one case of purchasing spare parts"

and one instance of sharing intelligence information from Israel and the U.S.-led coalition.

Nevertheless, the report said, the Bush administration continued to ship military equipment to Jordan until March 4, 1991, three days after the end of the war, while telling Congress shipments had been halted, and resumed deliveries three days later, again without telling Congress. The equipment included aircraft spare parts and parts for Hawk missiles, the report said.

The subcommittee report did not name any individuals in the Bush administration involved in the alleged duplicity. Senior Bush administration officials involved in Middle East policy at the time did not respond last night to requests for comment. When the subcommittee chairman, Rep. David R. Obey (D-Wis.), raised similar charges in an earlier House speech, the State Department said it had "no confirmed information of military parts or equipment moving from Jordan to Iraq during the gulf crisis."